

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, PGOV. UK

SUBJECT: POWELL PREVENTS GOVERNMENT REVERSE

1. THE CONSERVATIVE, ERRATIC AND CARPET-BAGGING NORTH-ERN IRELAND UNIONIST ENOCH POWELL DECEMBER 6 SAVED THE GOVERNMENT FROM DEFEAT ON A BILL WHICH WILL INCREASE EMPLOYERS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NATIONAL INSURANCE SCHEME. BECAUSE POWELL ABSTAINED AND WAS ABLE TO PER-SUADE SEVERAL OF HIS ULSTER UNIONIST COALITION COLLEAGUES TO JOIN HIM, THE GOVERNMENT WON THE FINAL VOTE BY A MARGIN OF TWO AFTER MISHAPS AND DEFECTIONS INVOLVING SEVERAL OF ITS SUPPORTERS HAD MADE IT APPEAR THE BILL WOULD BE LOST (TWO LABOR MP'S INADVERTENTLY MISSED THE DIVISION, WHILE ONE LEFT-WINGER AND THE TWO SCOTTISH LABOR PARTY MP'S VOTED AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT).

2. COMMENT. THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME THAT POWELL, WHO BY ANYIDEOLOGICAL CRITERIA SHOULD CONSIDER BOTH THE LABOR PARTY AND THE MEASURE UNDER CONSIDERATION ANATHEMAS, HAS AIDED THE GOVERNMENT, NOR IS IT LIKELY TO BE THE LAST. POWELL'S REASONS FOR SUPPORTING THE GOVERN-MENT APPEAR TO BE A STRONG MIXTURE OF PRACTICAL POLITICAL AND PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS, BOTH OF WHICH OVERRIDE THE IDEOLOGICAL PROCLIVITIES OF THIS USUALLY RIGID AND IN-FLEXIBLE MAN. ON THE POLITICAL SIDE, POWELL IS KNOWN TO

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BELIEVE THAT A GENERAL ELECTION WOULD BE UNTIMELY FOR THE

NI UNIONISTS, AND THAT HIS SEAT COULD WELL BE IN JEOPARDY, ESPECIALLY IF IT SHOULD BE CONTESTED BY IAN PAISLEY'S DEMOCRATIC UNIONIST PARTY. HIS INTENSE PERSONAL DISLIKE AND RESENTMENT OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADERSHIP, AND MRS. THATCHER IN PARTICULAR, HOWEVER, ARE PROBABLY THE OVERRIDING REASONS FOR HIS ACTIONS. HE SIMPLY DOES NOT WANT TO SEE THE TORIES BACK IN POWER.

3. POWELL AND OTHER NI UNIONISTS ARE JUST ONE OF SEVERAL ELEMENTS IN THE SMALL BUT CRITICAL GROUPING OF MINOR PARTIES THAT FOR CIRCUMSTANTIAL, TACTICAL OR STRATEGIC REASONS ARE CURRENTLY SATISFIED TO SEE THE CALLAGHAN GOVERNMENT CONTINUE IN OFFICE. AS WE HAVE REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, THE GOVERNMENT IS ABLE TO EXPLOIT THE CONCERNS AND INTERESTS OF THESE MINOR PARTIES TO SHORE UP ITS OWN SAGGING PARLIAMENTARY BASE AND TO FRUSTRATE THE TORIES. IT REMAINS DIFFICULT, AT LEAST IN THE NEAR TERM, TO ENVISAGE A SERIES OF CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH WOULD CAUSE THESE GROUPS TO ABANDON THEIR OCCASIONAL VISITS TO CALLAGHAN'S METAPHORICAL BED FOR A MORE PERMANENT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE "IRON LADY", MRS. THATCHER.

AMRSTRONG

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